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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

THE UNNECESSARIES OF LIFE.

TO a young couple, starting out as housekeepers, the first question that presents itself after the matter of house or rooms is fully settled, is, what shall form the decoration or furnishing of our new home? And in nine cases out of ten individual choice will be secondary to the shopman's recommendation, because the shopman is supposed to "know what they" are buying—that mysterious collection of nonentities who make us wear pasteboard hats when we prefer felt, tight boots when we like easy shoes, and English checks when our personal tastes are quiet. The young wife is envious of "them," and the young husband emulous of the same, and their first purchases are, therefore, of things that have no place in their apartments and no use in any apartment, but which "they"—speaking through the mouth of the shopkeeper—have sanctioned. That is the cause of the prevalent untasteful furnishing and decoration of a majority of our American homes.

Enter an English cottage or an American farm house, and what a cosiness there is; what unity, what fitness! The floors, if covered, are dressed in rag carpets, the furniture is simple and solid, the table is substantially furnished, the candlesticks glitter, and pots and pans shine in the kitchen. Means and end are commensurate. Now transfer the cottor or farmer to town, give him a little flat or a little house, and, after a few weeks of acquaintance with the ways of city life, what befalls? Why, this: that he wants to dress his house like William H. Vanderbilt's, and will at once set himself to making garish and unwholesome suggestions, in his surroundings, of what he has seen and learned of the environment of people who have wealth and taste. The result is deplorable.

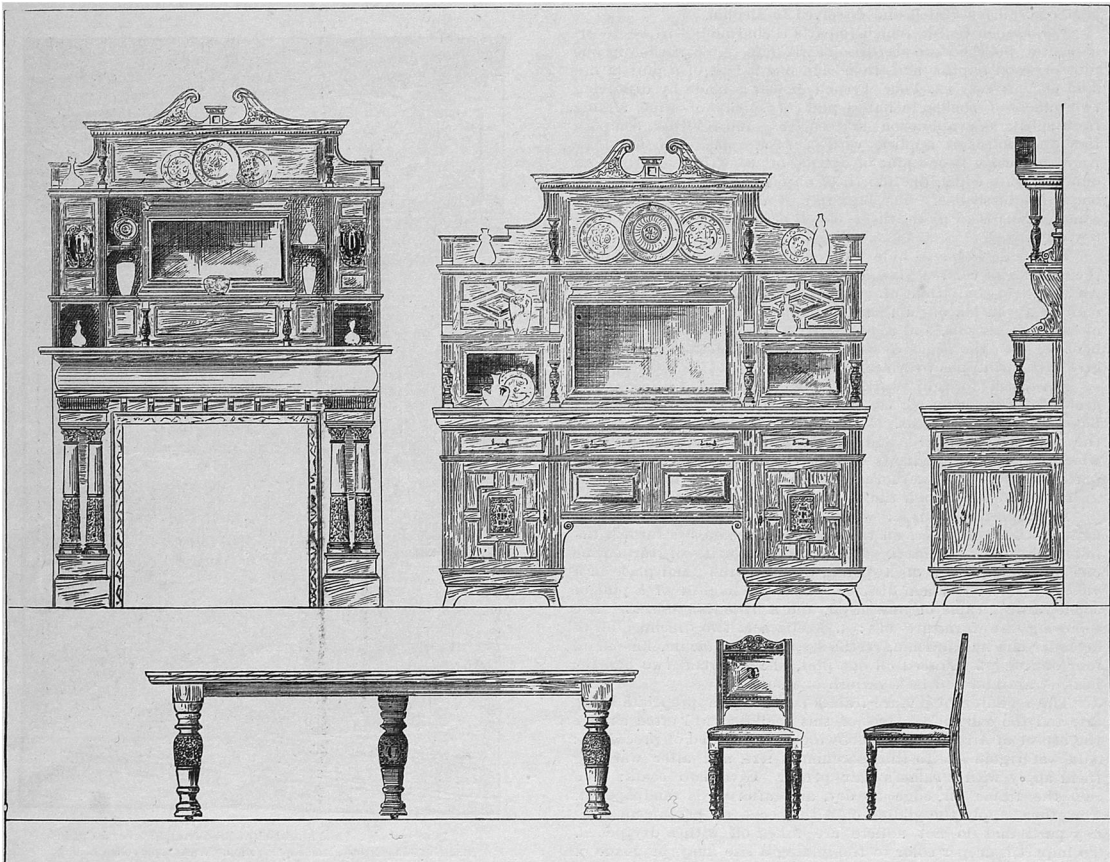
The one axiom of "Poor Richard" that seems ludicrously uncalled for is the one advising his clients to "buy nothing because it is cheap;" yet there is none that could be enforced with better results. In their anxiety to "keep up with the times," and dress and eat and furnish as "they" dictate, the young couple fall ready victims to those gentlemen who have goods to sell. The wealthy man has in his parlor a Persian rug,

consequently the beginners in housekeeping must have some kind of a mat in their little sitting room. It helps to make the room look small and stuffy, it trips people in the dark, it keeps doors from closing or opening, it is a repository for pins and hair and dust; never mind, it is the correct thing to have a mat in the parlor. Lace curtains are presumptively essential at the front windows, so, instead of cheap and beautiful Madras, curtains are put up that in a month look as if they were made of flannel, and that have shouting patterns and crinkly edges.

It is proper in large houses to have rich and capacious furniture, so the little house with little rooms must be gorged with furniture that does not fit it. A cabinet of bric-a-brac and a few vases and jars and statuettes to set on mantels and tables, are usual in large houses, so in addition to the crowd of objects already in the rooms there must needs be sundry articles of common glass and pottery. The best room thus looks as if it had been furnished and decorated by the carpet dealer, the furniture dealer and the tea store man, independently of each other. Of course, one must have pictures, and at least one or two "in oil." Beautiful etchings can be had for five dollars, beautiful photogravures for less, a pretty little water color is sometimes obtainable for fifteen or twenty; but no, one must have oil, and in the place where colored photogravures are sold there are several "real oil paintings" closing out at \$30 each, and these, being purchased, throw a definite gloom over all who have occasion to sit near them.

In furnishing, as in getting wealthy, we go too fast for our own security or good. Cheap things are bad. Unnecessary things are bad. Affairs that concern "them" are no concern of ours. The home growths should be our own growth, the development of our taste. To run us into ready made surroundings is to crowd a number seven intellect and soul into a number six casing; not only is the misfit unpleasant to see, but it is cramping and unhealthy, and reacts on all our energies.

AN old worn hair cloth rocker may be upholstered at home with raw silk and plush, the wood newly polished, rockers removed and replaced by rolling casters, making a handsome modern easy chair.



DINING-ROOM FURNITURE.

In dark fumigated oak; beveled glass panels in overmantel and sideboard. Brass scones for candles in overmantel. Dining table 4 feet 6 inches wide and extending to 16 or 18 feet, the leg in centre stationary. Chairs in sage green morocco leather or velvet.